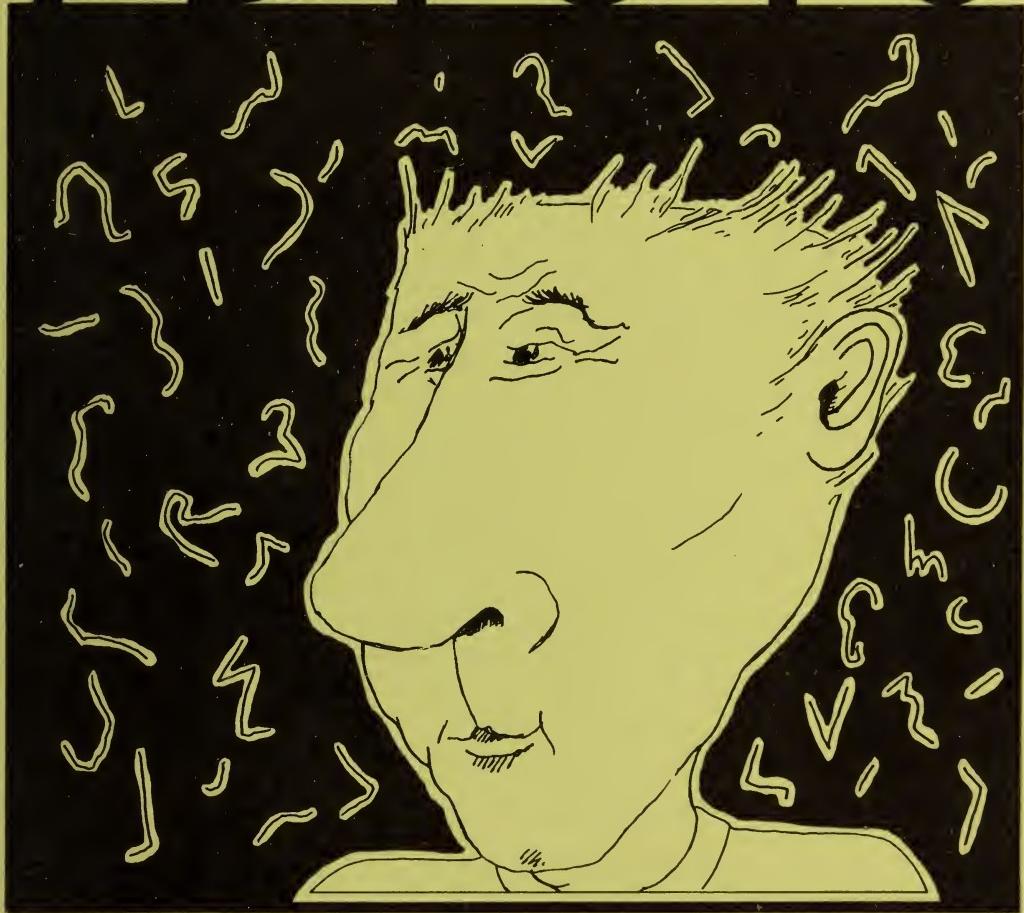


S I M P L E S T O R I E S

for

I D I O T S



CRAD KILODNEY

SIMPLE STORIES FOR IDIOTS

by

CRAD KILODNEY

Illustrated by

The author's retarded brother,

Furpo

To William Karlan,

Crad Kilodney

CHARNEL HOUSE

Toronto, Canada

Also by Crad Kildney

Mental Cases (Lowlands Review, 1978)
World Under Anaesthesia (Charnel House, 1979)
Gainfully Employed In Limbo (Charnel House, 1980)
Lightning Struck My Dick (Virgo Press, 1980)
Human Secrets -- Book One (Charnel House, 1981)
Human Secrets -- Book Two (Charnel House, 1982)
Sex Slaves of the Astro-Mutants (Charnel House, 1982)
Terminal Ward (Charnel House, 1983)
Pork College (Coach House Press, 1984)
Bang Heads Here, Suffering Bastards (Charnel House, 1984)
The Orange Book (Charnel House, 1984)
The Blue Book (Charnel House, 1985)
The Green Book (Charnel House, 1985)
The Scarlet Book (Charnel House, 1985)
The Yellow Book (Charnel House, 1985)
Cathy (Charnel House, 1985)
Foul Pus From Dead Dogs (Charnel House, 1986)
Incurable Trucks & Speeding Diseases (Charnel House, 1986)

* * * * *

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Front cover by Arno Wolf Jr.

Inside drawings by Furpo Kildney, who is
retarded but has a job

Book design by the author

* * * * *

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About The Author

Crad Kildney is the only writer in the world who not only publishes his own books but also sells them on the street as his sole occupation. He first appeared on the streets of Toronto in 1978 with a collection of stories published as a special issue of the American literary magazine *Lowlands Review*. The following year, he founded his own imprint, Charnel House. Two other collections have been published by Virgo Press and Coach House Press.

Kildney was born in the Borough of Queens, New York City, in 1948 and graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in astronomy. He abandoned his scientific career after a few months in favor of a literary one. He has lived in Canada since 1973. His stories and other writings have appeared in about 70 magazines and anthologies in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain, including the distinguished *Pushcart Prize* anthology. He has no formal training in literature or creative writing.

About The Illustrator

Furpo Kildney is the author's younger brother. Despite being retarded due to brain damage at birth, he has a job as a data processor for the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario and earns \$450 a week. He first got interested in drawing after answering an ad in a comic book for a free art lesson by mail. His drawings can now be seen in some of the most prestigious art galleries in the Yorkville section of Toronto.

INTRODUCTION

As I follow the work being done by my colleagues in the Canadian literary community, I am disappointed to see that nobody is writing books for people of very low intelligence. As the population gets stupider and stupider, thanks to TV, the public school system, and immigration, Canadian authors seem to be writing books that are more and more complex and intellectual. The audience for such books is shrinking so much that many writers can only be read and understood by other writers. This is no way to expand the book industry.

Here, for example, is a poem (at least, I think it's a poem, but I'm not sure) by a prominent Canadian poet:

*the le the the an a annee saint ani slaus that that or
this this what what asked the's in confusion some
a's a train passes thru or an or an an standing &
after sitting standing (yesterday this would've been
different tomorrow it will not be the same) & after
standing sitting after sitting sitting not sitting
& then you came*

Now, what the hell is that all about? How is an average person supposed to get that? I don't even get it, and I went to university.

Here's another piece of writing from a book by a respected colleague of mine:

Full summer moon rising obliquely over the pitcher plants and miniature sphagnum landscapes. Vigilance. Panavistic crystal night-vision of the silver lynx, silhouetted for an instant against the ocellus of the summer moon. Hypnotic cameo resumed without juncture. Stars dripping from the points of mulluscoid teats.

I think "mulluscoid teats" means a clam's or an oyster's tits, but that doesn't make any sense. The fellow who wrote this is really a very nice chap who acts completely normal whenever I bump into him and stop to talk, but I

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don't know how he expects to support his family by writing books with that kind of stuff in them.

Average (stupid) people pick up something like that, read a little bit of it, and then put the book down because it makes them feel stupid. And then these authors complain about not being able to make big royalty money, and their publishers keep asking for more government grants to stay in business because they can't sell enough books.

Now, I believe that even the stupidest people in this country would like to read at least one book in their lives, just so they can say, "I read a book once." (Comic books don't count.) So I have written this book of stories that any idiot can understand and enjoy, and if some of my fellow authors would wise up, they'd do the same thing.

*Crad Kildney
Toronto, Canada
Wednesday, 1986*

THE TROUBLED GOALIE

Clifford Schnauzer was the goalie for the Mifflin Lemmings of the Minor Atom AA Hockey League. He was the best goalie in the league. He was just super. Thanks to him, the Lemmings were in first place. If the Lemmings won the championship, all the NHL teams would be falling over each other to sign him, or at least they would telephone him.

It was just after a big game in which the Lemmings beat the Newton Newts 2-0 that something strange began to happen. Clifford heard a strange voice calling to him while he was in bed. He ignored it. He thought he was dreaming. He had a hard time sleeping that night because the voice kept him awake. It kept saying, "Clifford...Clifford...Come to the park."

The next day Clifford was very tired and missed a lot of shots at practice. His coach, Mr. Scrabowski, asked him what was wrong. Clifford said it was nothing.

That night Clifford heard the voice again, and he decided to investigate to see if some kind of trick was being played on him. The voice told him to come to the park, so he got up and walked over there. The voice directed him until he found himself standing in front of a big oak tree. "Clifford," said the tree, "I am your Master. You will do what I say."

Clifford felt mesmerized.* "Yes, Boss," he replied.

"Clifford," said the tree, "you will get a fifty-pound bag of sheep manure and dump it in front of the public library. Do it now."

"Yes, Boss," said Clifford. He walked around town until he came to a gardening supply store. He broke in, found a big bag of sheep manure, carried it to the public library, and dumped it out on the steps. It was the middle of the night, so no one saw him. By the time he got home it was 3:30 a.m. He didn't get much sleep.

The next day the Lemmings lost a game to the Nasalton

* Hypnotized. The word comes from the name of Joe Mesmer, an Ohio insurance salesman who invented this method for selling life insurance.

THE TROUBLED GOALIE

Nostrils. Everyone was surprised at how bad Clifford played. He seemed very tired. His coach forgave him and said everybody had a bad game once in a while.

In the paper that day was a news item about the manure dumped in front of the library. The police had no leads.

That night the tree spoke to Clifford again. "Clifford," it said, "I have another job for you. Get dressed."

So Clifford got dressed and went to the deserted park. The tree said to him, "Steal some white paint and paint a swastika on the front window of Greenberg's Chrysler-Plymouth."

"Yes, Boss," said Clifford in a daze. So he went to a hardware store, broke in, and stole some white paint and a brush. There was no burglar alarm, so he was lucky. He walked a long distance to get to the auto dealership, and when he got there, he painted a big swastika on the front window. When he got home it was nearly 4 a.m., and he would have to get up early for the bus trip to Westville for the game against the Pit Vipers.* He got very little sleep.

Clifford allowed six goals in the first period and had to be replaced. The Lemmings lost 8-2. His coach said, "What's the matter with you lately, Clifford? You been sick or something?"

"No, Coach, I just been tired. I ain't been getting enough sleep."

"You gotta get your sleep to be a good hockey player," said Coach Scrabowski. "Let's try to get with it, okay?"

"Okay, Coach."

That night Clifford went to bed early. He didn't want to hear the voice again. He was real worried about it. There was a story in the paper about the swastika he had painted. The police said they had got some fingerprints from the brush and paint can that he left there.

He was just dozing off when the voice spoke to him. It told him to come to the park.

"Do I have to?" asked Clifford.

"Yes," said the voice. "You must do as I say."

So Clifford went to the park and stood before the tree.

"Clifford," it said, "you must go to Lover's Lane and find a young couple by themselves. You must kill the guy

* A kind of poisonous snake commonly found in the music industry.

THE TROUBLED GOALIE

and drag the girl into the woods and rape her. Then you must cut her body into fourteen pieces."

"Yes, Boss," said Clifford, who could not resist the order.

So Clifford went way out of town to the place where kids liked to park and make out. He first stole a knife from a butcher shop. At the Lover's Lane there was just one car. He sneaked up on it. The guy and girl were making out like crazy. The girl was almost naked. Clifford yanked open the door and plunged the knife into the guy's heart. He died instantly. The girl screamed and tried to run away, but Clifford caught her, raped her, and cut her body into fourteen pieces. It sure was a mess. By the time he got home it was almost dawn.

The next day the story was in the papers: *Couple Murdered At Lover's Lane*. Clifford felt pretty bad, but he was only following the tree's orders.

At hockey practice the coach took Clifford aside and asked him in a nice way if there was anything he'd like to talk to him about, any sort of problem or trouble he'd like to get off his chest. Clifford said no. What he didn't know was that the coach had asked a friend of his who lived across the street from Clifford to watch Clifford's house to see if he was having late-night parties or something. This friend reported to the coach that Clifford had been going out in the middle of the night, but he didn't know where. So the coach knew something was very wrong. He was afraid to think what it might be.

That night the voice called to Clifford again and commanded him to come to the park. Clifford obeyed. "I'm here, Boss," he said to the tree.

"Clifford," said the tree, "you will steal some dynamite from the storeroom of the construction company out by the highway, and you will blow up the Palmer Old Age Home."

"Yes, Boss," said Clifford, who walked away in a daze.

He walked out to the construction site, broke into the storeroom, and was filling his pockets with dynamite when a police car pulled up. The night watchman had called the cops because he was just an old man making only \$4 an hour, and that wasn't enough to die for. So the cops arrested Clifford.

When they asked him what he was doing that for, he told

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them the whole story about the tree that gave him orders. They thought he was crazy. He said, "Come to the park and see for yourself." So they thought they might as well humor him. On the way to the park, he confessed to the other crimes, but they told him not to say anything without a lawyer because they wanted it to be legal.

Finally they got to the park. Clifford led them to the big oak tree. He spoke to it. "It's me, Boss. Show these guys how you talk. Tell them I was only following your orders."

But the tree didn't answer.

"This guy's crazy," said one of the cops.

"Yeah, he belongs in an insane asylum," said another.

"Wait!" said Clifford. "The tree really talks! Come on, tree, say something!"

"Let's go, buddy," said the cops, dragging him away.

"It really does talk! I swear it!" said Clifford.

"Yeah, right," they said.

So Clifford was taken away. He was eventually put in an insane asylum, so he wasn't likely to ever play in the NHL.

The tree is still there. Who will it talk to next? What other terrible crimes will be committed in Mifflin? Will the police and the public ever find out the truth? This could go on forever because nobody believes in talking trees.



THE SCREAM OF THE MUTILATED

Shakespeare said that truth is stranger than fiction, which means that this story is not as strange as truth because it's fiction. But if it were to come true, then it would be stranger than it is now. I hope that's clear. Think about it.

What made Sam Wackernagel's day of bloody horror so mysterious was the way that it began in such a normal, innocent way. The alarm clock went off, he got up, and got ready to go to work. When he took his shower, he had the horrible thought of blood spurting out of the shower instead of water, but it was only water. His wife made him breakfast -- two eggs and sausages. He thought how horrible it would be if the sausages were actually the fingers of a packing plant worker that had accidentally gotten chopped off and packed as sausages. But when Sam examined them closely, he could see they were perfectly ordinary sausages -- unless, of course, they contained human meat disguised as pork.

When he stepped outdoors and headed for the bus stop, the sun seemed so normal, and so did the air and the birds and the insects. But he was immediately struck by the fact that his neighbor's lawn mower was standing beside the house and the side part of the lawn had been left half-mown with the mower just standing there. Had something interrupted his neighbor in the middle of the job, perhaps a secret terror hidden in the basement that had the power to suck out people's brains and replace them with something alien?

When Sam got on the bus, he looked at the other people. They seemed perfectly normal -- too normal, he thought. He was very suspicious. They looked like the people he saw every day, but were they? He was afraid to talk to them. He hoped they did not pick him out as one of the few people in town that had not yet been "taken over." But then he felt foolish because there was no proof of anything like that happening.

As the bus rode along the overpass, he wondered what it would be like if the driver suddenly swerved to the right and

THE SCREAM OF THE MUTILATED

the bus plunged down onto the expressway. They would all be killed. The bus seemed very strange today, but Sam couldn't quite figure out in what way.

When he got to work at the Vole Building, headquarters of the Vole Chewing Gum and Trading Card Company, the lobby seemed strangely normal as the workers crammed into the elevators to go to their respective floors. He had once been told by a strange foreigner in a black cape at a cocktail party that there was an elevator in town that led to the secret caves of the "Deros," as the stranger referred to them. To get to the caves, you had to push the Basement button on the elevator, and when the elevator got down to the basement, you had to push the Basement button again twice. The elevator would then go down again into the caves of the Deros. Sam wondered if one of the elevators in the Vole Building was the secret elevator. What would happen if by accident somebody pressed the button just the right way and a lot of people ended up down there? Would they be tortured and slaughtered by a strange subterranean race of creatures with big heads, four eyes, and fangs?

Nervously, Sam got into an elevator and was relieved when it headed upwards. He got off at the fifth floor and headed for his desk in the accounting department.

The people who worked in Accounting seemed so ordinary, yet did he really know them? Wasn't it possible that one of them had a terrible secret involving weird cults and ritual killings? He thought of all the stories of mass murderers who had led double lives as post office workers or clowns or shoe salesmen by day and then went out at night to hack innocent victims to pieces with cleavers or meat hooks.

He noticed that someone was missing today -- Cynthia, the pretty brunette who wore short skirts and tight sweaters to show off her voluptuous body. "Where's Cynthia?" he asked Clyde Baxter, the Supervisor.

"She has a cold," said Clyde rather impatiently and then went into his office.

Sam thought Clyde might be hiding something. Cynthia wasn't the sort of girl who would just catch a cold for no reason. This seemed very peculiar to Sam. There could be something truly horrible going on. He thought he'd better watch his step because he had his doubts about Clyde. Clyde had always acted so normal on the surface, but those were the

type of people you had to watch out for.

The morning passed along very quietly. Sam tried to forget his fears by digging into his paperwork, which consisted of invoices for shipments of Vole Chewing Gum and various series of trading cards containing a square of Vole Bubble Gum. Sam thought of all that gum being chewed by millions of innocent children. In theory, it would be easy for a maniac to wreak havoc by poisoning the ingredients in the giant chewing gum vats. Or a slow-acting kind of bacteria might slowly turn the children of the country into carriers of a new kind of plague. Sam knew that there were chemists and other scientists who worked in the company lab on the top floor. He had never been up there. It seemed that only a small number of people had access to that lab -- the Vole Brothers (Henry, Doug, and Wendell) and their scientific and technical people. It would be very easy for some kind of secret experiments to be conducted that Sam and the others in the accounting department might never find out about. His Supervisor, Clyde, reported directly to Henry Vole, so it was possible that Clyde was in on whatever plot the Voiles were hatching, if any.

Sam got up to go to the men's room. It was empty. He went into a stall to attend to his call of nature. He was almost afraid to look down in the toilet because he might see the eyeballs or ears of a person who could have been murdered and chopped into small pieces. Finally he looked, and there was nothing but water. After his call of nature, he nervously pressed the handle, considering whether he would be able to keep his sanity if the toilet were to refill with blood. Fortunately, it didn't happen.

He nervously went over to the sink to wash his hands and comb his hair. Shaking, he turned the taps, and out came a stream of...water! He quickly washed his hands and combed his hair. He could feel his heart beating with anxiety. Then he realized that the floor had been freshly waxed -- on a Tuesday night! This struck him as very strange. Why would the night cleaners wax the men's room floor on a Tuesday night, unless....Sam knew the answer. They wanted to completely remove any evidence of what had happened!

At lunch time, Sam ate in the company lunchroom. A catering truck arrived every day by the back door, and a lot of the Vole workers bought their lunches from it. But the

Vole Brothers never did. They brought their own or went to a restaurant. Was it because they knew something about the catering truck's food that no one else did?

When Sam went back to work, he noticed Clyde was still out to lunch, or was he? Maybe he was somewhere else. Then he sat down and noticed that an invoice on his desk had been moved a quarter of an inch from the way he left it before lunch. He never locked his desk drawers. It had never occurred to him than anyone would want to do him harm by putting something in one of the drawers -- like a booby trap or a deadly spider. Sam was terrified of spiders, as well as snakes, scorpions, and polar bears. Any of these would provide a truly horrible way to die, he pondered.

As he looked around him, it seemed that his co-workers were blissfully unaware of anything going on that might involve death or torture or bodies or fiendish experiments. People had a remarkable way of mentally blocking out upsetting thoughts. If he were to even hint at something evil, they would think he was crazy.

As he got up to go to the water cooler, he happened to glance down the hall, and what he saw made his blood freeze! Julius, the janitor, was just disappearing around the corner with what seemed to be a rope and a tool box with peculiar objects sticking out of it! What did he know about Julius anyway? Julius always acted rather stupid, but maybe it was all an act. Where had he come from? He had been there even longer than Sam had been. Sam knew that Julius had a complete set of keys to every door in the building. This meant he had to know about what was going on throughout the building. And it occurred suddenly to Sam that he had never actually seen Julius arrive or leave. *He was always there!*

Sam resisted the temptation to follow Julius to see where he was going. He returned to his desk and resumed his work. But he could not shake off the eerie thought of live bodies dangling from hooks and being subjected to something too nauseating for words. At times he had thought he heard sounds in the elevator shafts but always assumed they were just machinery or the air conditioning. But what if....

He picked up the invoice on the top of the stack and was about to mark it "Paid" when he noticed the quantity of gum that had been ordered by what had always been a small account. It was twice as much as usual. And the signature

bore a tell-tale hook on the letter "t." Sam had read about this in a book on handwriting analysis. He knew it was significant -- significant because it meant attention to detail. Whatever strange affair was going on must be very complicated, and Ed's Smoke Shop in Pemberton had something to do with it. Then he remembered a news item about a person in Pemberton who had just disappeared for no reason.

The hands of the clock turned slowly and painfully like the wheels of a medieval rack on which a person was being tortured until his or her arms and legs were ripped off. Sam felt a horrible sense of doom and death and could not shake it off no matter how hard he tried.

He glanced out the window and saw dark clouds gathering. Then the air conditioning went off momentarily, leaving his ears filled with the pounding of his blood. He didn't know if he could take much more of the menacing calm of the off-ice.

Finally 4:30 came, and he stacked his paperwork neatly, picked up his jacket, and headed for the elevator.

The ride down was slow because the elevator had to stop at each floor. He looked into the faces of the other people, looking for something in their eyes, some hint that they knew more than they would talk about. He thought of the basement again. When the elevator arrived at the ground floor, he lingered behind until Julius came along carrying a mysterious canvas bag and said to him, "Whut choo be stan-din' in deah fo', Mistuh Wackuhnagel?"

"Uh, nothing, nothing," replied Sam, as he scurried out of the elevator. As he passed through the lobby, he looked back just in time to see Julius in the elevator and the doors closing. The red arrow above the door indicated that the elevator was on its way *down!*

As the bus lurched uncertainly back to Sam's neighborhood, the dark clouds that had been gathering began to send down a light drizzle, giving the entire sky an aura of unspeakable horror. Having forgotten his umbrella, Sam got rather damp between the bus stop and his house, but it hardly mattered since he was already drenched with sweat.

When he walked in the door, he could smell meat cooking, but there was something odd about it. His wife said it was the curry that she had used to season it. He had a passing thought about her: she had once dated one of the

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managers at Vole. But this, of course, could not involve her in any way with....He shook the feeling off with an elaborate shrug and sat down to eat his dinner.

When he went to bed that night, Sam Wackernagel considered himself lucky to be alive, but how long would his luck hold out? He pondered all the mysterious things he had noticed at work that day, and he could not help feeling that there was something very sinister about the fact that everything could be theoretically explained in some perfectly *normal* way, as if it had been arranged that way. He could not prove any of his suspicions. But then he thought as he lay in bed that perhaps he had been wrong about it all. Perhaps everything *was* perfectly all right. Yes, of course it was. He had been very silly. He read too many horror stories, that was all.

So he smiled sheepishly at his own foolishness as he lay under the covers beside his wife, and he thought he would make her laugh tomorrow at breakfast by telling her all the silly things he had been imagining. Yes, they would both get a good laugh out of it. And with this reassuring thought, he went soundly to sleep....

Then he awoke to find himself tied to a metal table! Now he remembered! He had been given a drug to put him to sleep, and he had had a dream! Yes, everything he thought he had experienced at work had been a dream! *This* was the reality! One of his legs had already been hacked off, and now the laughing fiends were coming back to finish him off! He could see them approaching with their blood-stained knives! And a moment later Sam Wackernagel was screaming, screaming, SCREAMING -- THE SCREAM OF THE MUTILATED!!!



THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

The doctor's doorbell rang a few days after his talk at the school. He went to the door and let in two boys, Tom and Jim, who were evidently much disturbed about something. Brought into the consulting room after the last patient had left, they started to speak, stopped, then tried again. Finally Tom blurted out:

"Doctor, is there anything we can do that will keep us from going crazy?"

The doctor guessed what had led to this question, for he had heard it asked several times before. It took a little cross-questioning, however, before the boys would admit what had happened. The truth was that Tom's mother had suspected that he was handling his genital organs, and had told him in horrified tones that "the insane asylums are just full of people who have gone crazy because of such self-pollution." What made it worse was that she really believed it; and she was so certain about it and so upset that the boys believed it too. Of course, Tom at once told Jim.

Both the boys had stayed awake the greater part of that night, and the next, too, and had brooded over the matter pretty steadily ever since. Then they heard the doctor talk in school but hadn't gotten up the courage to ask him about the matter. At last they couldn't stand it any longer, so they came to him in terror to find out if there was anything they could do to save themselves from this terrible end. They just couldn't believe what he had told them that day.

The answer he was able to give them was prompt, direct, and reassuring. He explained that while the habit they had been indulging in was anything but a desirable one, and had once been considered even by doctors to be a very dangerous one, they had nothing to fear. He told them that it is now known to be a scientific fact that, while it is something to be discontinued, it is nothing to worry about, unless they were to carry it on into their later adult years. And he was sure that they had sense enough not to do that.

He told them, as he had told the fellows at school, that it was kid stuff, like thumb sucking, that most sensible

fellows succeeded in stopping it when they realized what it was. To be sure, some of the patients in mental hospitals do indulge in the habit. But if they do, it's because they are already mentally unbalanced. They certainly never got that way as a result of masturbating. The belief that that was the cause of their mental condition is all poppycock.

The boys were plainly greatly relieved at what the doctor told them. But there was evidently something more that they hadn't quite gotten up their courage to mention. The doctor realized this, and after waiting for them to go on, he encouraged them:

"Come on, come on, get it off your chests. Come clean with whatever it is that's still eating on you. Let's get it all over with, now that we've gone so far."

After looking at each other to see which should speak first, Jim finally broke down and admitted what was still disturbing them:

"I guess I believe you when you say that most fellows get over this all right. But you see it's a little different in our case. We've both got 'lost manhood' as a result of what we've been doing for so long. And we haven't got enough money to pay the doctor to cure us, even if it wasn't too late to do anything for us."

"What doctor are you talking about?"

"Why, the one whose address was printed on the poster we saw on the wall of a men's rest room. It explained all about our trouble. It said that 'wet dreams' were a sure sign of 'lost manhood'; and it said for anyone who suffered from these 'night pollutions' to go to his office for treatment. If a fellow wasn't too far gone and could still be cured, he'd try to do what he could for him. Do you suppose there's any hope that he could cure us?"

"That crook is no doctor. He's just a quack getting blood money from boys and men like yourselves who don't know that reputable physicians never advertise. As I told you the other day, the 'self abuse' and 'secret vice' and 'self pollution' the ad tells about are all silly old-fashioned names that were used when people thought this bad habit caused all sorts of dreadful things. For even if a fellow should slip and give way to it, some time he'll overcome it. I believe you've stopped the habit. So forget all about it. And forget too all the terrible effects you've been reading

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and hearing about, for I can assure you you'll never suffer from any of them. I wish all the boys and men who are terrified by this sort of dirty advertising had the good sense to talk to someone who knows the score. That would break up this racket. Good night." The doctor led the relieved boys to the door.

Once they were gone, he changed into his chicken suit, jumped on top of the piano, clucking, and tugged his withered meat for all it was worth.



OCCURRENCE AT UNTERKLEIDUNG BRIDGE

It was nearly midnight. It was cold. A light rain was falling. Two groups of men stood at either end of the Unterkleidung Bridge, which connects East and West Berlin.

On the east end stood a group of Russian officials and East German guards, as well as an American spy, Bob Cornish. Cornish had been captured while on a mission for the C.I.A. photographing missile sites, nuclear power plants, and the dormitory of a girls' technical school.

On the west end stood a group of American officials and guards, as well as the Russian spy Igor Schpilkah. Schpilkah, on a mission for the K.G.B., had been captured while posing as a vending machine repairman at an Air Force base in Alabama.

At exactly midnight the two spies would be exchanged. Each had spent several years in prison, and whatever they knew had been beaten out of them. At each end of the bridge, an official was on the phone to his government waiting for the final authorization for the exchange.

The hour grew closer. Then at midnight each official received the go-ahead and put down his phone.

The Russians ordered the gate raised at the east end. "Good-bye and good luck," the senior official said to Cornish as the American stepped toward freedom.

The Americans raised their gate and said a polite good-bye to Schpilkah. Then the Russian stepped forward and headed toward freedom.

The two spies walked slowly toward the centre of the bridge, each as tense as a bull elephant on the lookout for pygmies. As they approached each other, each figure loomed larger out of the mist until they could see each other's facial features. Their pace slowed until they stood confronting each other at the centre of the bridge.

"Yankee swine," muttered Schpilkah.

"Dirty Commie," muttered Cornish.

"Imperialist dog!"

"Pinko rat!"

"STINKING CAPITALIST DEGENERATE!"

OCCURRENCE AT UNTERKLEIDUNG BRIDGE

"RED BASTARD QUEER!"

"OH, YEAH? TAKE THAT!"

"SUCK ON THIS!"

And the two men were pummeling each other with their fists as their countrymen gasped in amazement.

"Stop it! Stop it!"

"They'll kill each other!"

Cornish slammed Schpilkah with a right to the jaw. Schpilkah replied with a thrust to the belly. They fought like crazed crayfish as they stumbled together toward the railing of the bridge.

The guards and officials from each side ran toward the men, but it was too late. Locked in their death struggle, the two spies hung precariously over the railing and then fell to their deaths in the cold, murky waters of the river.

The officials watched in horrified silence as the current carried the bodies out of sight.

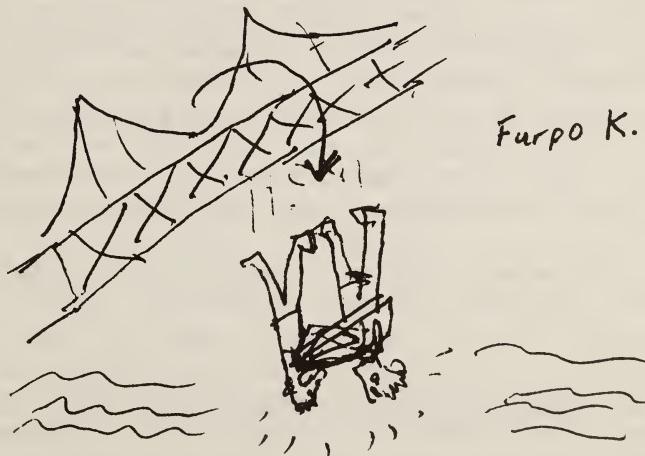
The chief Russian official adjusted his hat, coughed nervously, and said to his American counterpart, "Do you suppose they knew each other from somewhere?"

The American wiped his brow with his handkerchief and replied, "Maybe."

"Well," said the Russian, "there's nothing more to be done. Good night."

"Yes," agreed the American. "Good night."

And the two groups got back into their cars and drove away.



MAGUMBA COMES TO CANADA

The sun was setting over the dense tropical jungle of Africa, sending shafts of yellow, purple, green, and pink light down through the trees to alert the many fascinating varieties of plants, animals, and minerals of the coming of night. In the midst of this colorful, exotic picture of a land not yet spoiled by machinery, television, or wrestling, a lone figure walked along the familiar path leading to his native hut, where his wife and child waited by the fire. His name was Magumba, and he was a native of the Kwangi tribe. He wore a loincloth, wore his hair short, and carried a spear, which he used to hunt with so as to provide food for his family. Over his shoulder he carried a sack with the food he had caught that day, as well as interesting rocks for a collection he maintained as a hobby.

His wife, Congolia, also a native of the Kwangi tribe, greeted him at the front door of the hut. He hugged her and then hugged his four-year-old son, Bunga, who had deformed, flipper-like legs and no arms and resembled a seal.

"Have you had a good day in the jungle?" Congolia asked him.

"Yes, very good," replied Magumba, dumping the contents of his sack on the floor. He had brought back a turtle, a fish, a bird's egg, some snails, a small lizard, and a few tomatoes he happened to find. He also had found a nice rock with speckles of gold in it.

As they sat around the fire eating, Magumba remarked, "Although we are doing okay for ourselves within the context of a jungle-type environment, I do get tired sometimes, and I worry about little Bunga. Who will take care of him when he gets older and we are dead?"

"Yes," replied Congolia, "it will be a problem. If only we could do something for his condition. Also, we have never had a vacation because you have to hunt all the time."

"I wonder if life could be better in another country, like in the book I've been reading." The book he was referring to was a schoolbook left behind by a missionary who, unfortunately, had been eaten by a hostile neighboring tribe,

the Fungos. Magumba had taught himself to read and speak English just by looking at the book a little bit every night until it all began to make sense. He had read interesting stories and seen interesting pictures about the faraway country called Canada. He was very puzzled by something called snow, and he did not think the polar bears looked very friendly, but he thought that with his natural-born skills as a native and his ability to speak English, he might be able to adapt to Canada anyway. He thought that Bunga might also be helped by the white witch doctors, too.

With these cheerful thoughts, the family went to sleep.

The next day, Magumba set out in a different direction, and he was surprised when he looked across a flat, grassy patch of land and saw two white people -- a man and a woman. The woman was naked and lying on her back. She had very flat breasts, not like the big, floppy ones of the Kwangi tribe. The man had this weird little box that he seemed to be looking through at the woman and which made clicking noises. The woman would shift her body, and the man would look into the box and say, "Hold it," and there would be a click. Then he would say something like "Great!" or "Beautiful!"

Suddenly, Magumba spotted something in the grass moving toward the woman. It was a deadly Russell's viper*, whose poison was strong enough to kill an elephant, or five cattle, or twenty humans, or 340 chickens. The snake was only a foot from the woman's body when Magumba jumped out of the bushes, ran forward, and cut off its head with his spear. The woman and man both screamed, then Magumba held up the dead snake and said in English, "Russell's viper. Very poisonous."

The photographer said to him excitedly, "You've just saved the life of Penelope Teflon, the world's leading fashion model!"

And Penelope hugged Magumba and was not at all shy about being naked because she knew natives expected women to be naked, if at all possible.

The three of them walked back into a tent for a friendly discussion. "What can I do to repay you?" asked the photographer.

Magumba thought for a moment. Then he replied, "I would like to take my family to live in Canada."

* Poisonous snake named after Jane Russell, who discovered it.

MAGUMBA COMES TO CANADA

The photographer said that would be very expensive. Magumba opened his bag to see if there was anything of value he could offer. He had a few more rocks with flecks of gold in them. The photographer said he thought the rocks were very pretty and that if Magumba could show him where such gold-speckled rocks could be found, he would buy Magumba and his family airplane tickets to Canada.

The next day, Magumba led the two of them to the place, and the man realized that there was enough gold there to make him rich.* He told Magumba that he would take him and his family to the capital and put them on a plane to Canada.

Magumba's wife, Congolia, worked very hard that night weaving some new cothing for them out of animal skins and leaves. The next morning, they were driven to the capital by the photographer. He bought them airline tickets to Canada, gave them a few dollars for pocket money, and then drove them to the airport. Penelope was with them, and she gave Magumba a big kiss for good luck and explained to some reporters who were following her that Magumba had saved her life. They became very excited and began firing questions at him and taking pictures. Magumba could only say shyly that he had done what any Kwangi man would do in that situation. He said if there were any Russell's vipers in Canada, he would be happy to kill them.

The airplane trip was very exciting. It was the first time Magumba and his family had been in the air. People kept looking at them rudely because they were dressed in formal Kwangi attire. But the food was good, and there were even magazines to read. The toilets were a bit hard to figure out, but Magumba was able to read the instructions.

The trip took a whole day with several stops. When the plane finally landed at Toronto, there was a big surprise. A brass band began playing, and a crowd began cheering as soon as Magumba and his family stepped off the plane. "Do you suppose it's for us?" Magumba asked his wife. Then he caught sight of a sign that read "MAGUMBA, WELCOME TO CANADA."

* The "gold" actually turned out to be iron pyrite, much to the photographer's disappointment. You don't have to know this to follow the rest of the story, but it's just a small detail I wanted to mention because I don't want a lot of people to rush down to Africa right away and dig up the whole jungle looking for gold and upset the environment.

They were met by an official-looking person in a tuxedo, who said he was with the government. He had been sent to whisk them through Customs and Immigration and get them settled. As they passed into the terminal, Magumba caught sight of a newspaper vending box. It was the Toronto Sun. His photo was on the front page, along with the headline "*NATIVE HERO SAVES FASHION MODEL FROM SNAKE.*" It hadn't taken long for the news to get to Canada.

The native family was ushered into a private room with a Customs and Immigration official decked out in gold braids and a shiny green hat. He shook hands with them and said how excited he was that they had chosen to come to Canada. "Do you have visas or passports or anything like that?"

"I don't know what they are," replied Magumba.

"Oh, well, no matter, ha, ha. I'll just use my discretionary authority on these forms." And he scribbled a few lines on some forms, stamped them, and handed one to Magumba. "There. Now you are landed immigrants."

"Thank you," replied Magumba. "Do I have to pay money? I have some here." And he held out the traveling money the photographer had given him.

"Oh! Ha, ha! That's very funny! Canadian Tire money! Ha, ha! No, that's for shopping at Canadian Tire. But my staff took up a little collection for you in case you needed a stake to get started with. Here it is." And the official handed him a wad of bills -- about five hundred dollars.

"Thank you very much," replied Magumba. "Now tell me, please, where I can build a little hut."

"Ha, ha, that's funny," said the official. "You don't have to worry about that. The government's representative will drive you to a hotel, where you can stay for a few days until you find an apartment. You'll love Toronto. It's full of people who have come from many lands. We wish we could have many more."

So Magumba and his family were driven by the first official to the Four Seasons Sheraton, across the street from City Hall. They were given the special Immigrant Honour Discount -- a family suite for \$25 a night. Little Bunga loved it so much he wanted to live there forever and eat the ice cream sold by the vendors across the street.

While they were there, they went down into the shopping mall and bought some Canadian-type clothing, although several

people told them their native clothing was the "new look" and they should keep it. But Magumba could tell that Toronto was basically a conservative place, so he wanted to look more Canadian.

The next step was to find an apartment. Many apartment managers were calling them up to try to get them as tenants. It was a difficult choice to make. One brochure that was delivered to them showed a wonderful building on the lake shore. Congolia liked it.

So they went to this place called Harbourside. The manager showed them a lovely two-bedroom apartment and offered it to them for \$400 a month. As Magumba was a little short of cash, the manager accepted a token payment to make it official, knowing that a man like Magumba would have no problem finding a good job.

Magumba felt a little strange not having to hunt for food, and Congolia had to ask a neighbor how to use the kitchen appliances. It was summer, so little Bunga did not have to worry about school just yet. He watched television all day long and learned what breakfast cereals and toys to ask his parents for.

After only a few days, Magumba found a job. He was hired as an adjudicator trainee for the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario. The interviewer told him he was the most intelligent applicant they had had in over a year. The salary was \$350 a week during the training period, and Magumba would get a raise after that.

Magumba's career at the Workers' Compensation Board was a rocketing success, not only because of his native skills but also because he had the political clout of a celebrity, and everyone wanted to be his friend. Also, many young women wanted to take him home so they could look at his penis, but he explained calmly that a married Kwangi man could only show his penis to his wife.

In only a few weeks, Magumba became a senior adjudicator. It was his job to examine claims of work-related accidents and decide which ones were valid, after which the Pension Department would decide on the amount of money given to the claimant. Some claimants would come to him personally with their sad stories and cry on his shoulder, and he would often take them out for a nice meal and a movie to cheer them up. This made for great publicity for the Board. Others

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would try to trick him with stories of accidents that never happened, but he had learned in the jungle how to read honesty or dishonesty in a man's eyes, so they were almost never successful.

After another month or so, Magumba was promoted to Team Coordinator over several candidates who had been there longer, but they didn't resent it. Everyone at the Board cared solely about seeing the best people get ahead and having the Board do the best possible job for the poor injured worker. Besides, Magumba was so well liked they were all happy to see him get ahead.

A few months later, however, Magumba's manager retired, and the Board had to replace him. So the executives held a secret meeting to decide on a replacement. It was either Magumba or a white fellow who had a Master's degree in public administration but no native skills or jungle-related experience. There was a long discussion. Finally they decided, "Magumba's our man! He can do it! He has those native skills they don't teach in university!" So Magumba got promoted to Manager, and the other fellow was so disappointed he jumped down an elevator shaft and killed himself.

Meanwhile, things were happening with Congolia and Bunga. Congolia became a model and appeared on the covers of *Flare* and *Chatelaine* wearing the Kwangi *bashandi* (lip plate), and it instantly became the new look. All over Toronto, secretaries and file clerks were going around with lip plates.

And Bunga had an operation to give him little plastic arms. His flipper legs remained as they were because it was too complicated to change them. Bunga became a common sight on the street as he pushed himself along the sidewalk on a skateboard at tremendous speed. He appeared on a TV show hosted by Peter Gzowski and did some tricks on the skateboard, and Peter Gzowski cried and said it was the most moving thing he had ever witnessed on television.

Magumba had only been a manager for a few weeks when he was summoned upstairs by the Executive Director of the Board. The Executive Director said there was something terrible happening that he didn't know how to handle, and Magumba was the only person he trusted enough to take into his confidence. It seemed that quite a few claimants who had been getting pensions for a long time were disappearing, and later their skeletons were turning up in remote places. This was good

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in a way because the Board didn't have to keep paying them. On the other hand, if their deaths had anything to do with the Board, it would result in a terrible scandal. "Here's the complete file on these deaths, Magumba. You must solve this mystery. Use your native skills, but take no action without informing me."

"Yes, sir!" said Magumba.

So Magumba went back to his office and went through the thick file looking for clues. He noticed that the claim numbers of all the dead claimants ended with the digit '4.' He knew that both the adjudicators and Pension Department personnel divided their work loads according to the last digit of the claim number, which meant that all these claimants had been handled by the same person in Pensions. This was no mere coincidence. He did some discreet checking and found out that the individual was a black pensions clerk named Lardell Jeepers. So he got his file from Personnel. As soon as he saw the picture in the file, he could see at once that Lardell Jeepers was in fact a member of the Fungo tribe -- in other words, a cannibal! Only Magumba, a Kwangi, could recognize this. So he decided to follow this Jeepers fellow after work and see where he went.

The mystery was soon solved. Jeepers was luring selected pensioners to secluded areas, killing them, and eating them. Magumba reported this to the Executive Director and offered to kill Jeepers, but the Executive Director was afraid of a scandal. So instead, they summoned Jeepers and presented him with their evidence. As soon as Jeepers saw Magumba, he knew he was a Kwangi and that he must have used his native skills to follow him. The game was up. He confessed. He said he was only trying to weed out a few social parasites who were costing the Board a lot of money and that most of them were Italians anyway, so it didn't matter. The Executive Director said, "All nationalities must be treated alike. We will not tolerate prejudice. If we were to let you eat any one of them, we'd have to let you eat them all." So the net result of all this was that Lardell Jeepers was bribed to quit with a year's severance pay and a fine reference. He later got a job as director of a nursing home.

Magumba had saved the Board from a scandal, and the Executive Director surprised him by telling him that he was going to retire and recommend him as his successor. Two months

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later, Magumba became Executive Director of the Workers' Compensation Board of Ontario.

But no inspirational story of an immigrant's success would be true to life without some tragedy. Only a few days after Magumba's appointment, Congolia was electrocuted by lightning while modeling aluminum swimwear on a boat during a thunderstorm that sprang up out of nowhere. And little Bunga skated under the wheels of a bus and was killed.

It took Magumba a long time to get over this double tragedy despite being a brave Kwangi to whom violent death was no stranger. Many young women at the Board tried to cheer him up, but he wasn't in the mood to socialize, and his heavy work load made it impossible to think of pleasure.

But Magumba's life took another turn for the better. Premier David Peterson had admired Magumba for a long time and had him in mind for a very special post -- Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. This would make him the Queen's representative. Peterson knew Magumba would look very good in such a post, which was entirely ceremonial in nature. When he offered him the job, Magumba accepted at once.

Lieutenant-Governor Magumba was a media hit. When he delivered a speech to open the new session of Provincial Parliament, he called on all the parties to set aside their differences and do what was right for the people. Premier Peterson and the other party leaders were moved to tears. Magumba T-shirts became all the rage, and a commemorative stamp was issued in his honor.

Magumba also surprised his admirers by revealing that he was something of a poet. He gave one of his poems to the newspapers:

"Search For Meaning"

I have searched for a rock.
I have not found one.
I have searched for a twig.
I have not found one.
I have searched for a beehive,
But there wasn't any.
Therefore I shall lower my bumba cloth
And impregnate the night.

A book of his poems was soon published by the firm of Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd. under the title *Impregnate The Night*. It sold one million copies, and Magumba was awarded

the Governor-General's Award for poetry. Margaret Atwood refused to attend the awards ceremony because she thought it was the stupidest book of poetry she had ever read, but several distinguished critics praised it for its "new naturalism."

Among the many fan letters that reached Magumba regarding his book was one from Princess Diana herself. "*I would so like to meet you someday,*" she wrote him. At this time, Diana was in mourning because Prince Charles had been assassinated. Some animal rights activists had killed him with an exploding polo ball.

It was not long before Diana found a pretext to visit Canada: she was looking for a private school for her children, William and Henry, where they would be far away from all forms of terrorism. As Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, Magumba greeted her and was her host at a lavish banquet. Later in the evening they danced, and Magumba could not help feeling a certain masculine urge as he held Diana close to him. She herself had always harbored a secret desire for a black man, and there was instant electricity between them. Diana could think of nothing else than his primitive black shaft.

The sleazier London tabloids were soon buzzing with rumors. One of them ran the headline "*Di To Wed Canadian Jigaboo?*" over a picture of them taken at the banquet. But this did not deter Magumba and Diana, who spent a great deal of time together over the next week or two.

At last, when they were alone in his house one night, Magumba asked her to marry him. She said yes at once. Propriety forbade them from having intercourse before they were legally married, so a Justice of the Peace was awakened at 2:30 in the morning and rushed to the house by limousine. The ceremony was concluded in a few minutes, the Justice of the Peace left, and the newlyweds spent the rest of the night discovering the dark domain of raunchy sex. Diana was to write in her diary, "*After a night with HIM, I don't have to fantasize about horses any more.*"

Magumba, Diana, and the children were very happy for a while, but the stupid publicity began to get on their nerves. All the trashy tabloids persistently wrote wild stories of the couple's sex life with such headlines as "*Why Di Prefers Dark Meat*" and "*Magumba Turns Di Into Panting Slut.*" And

the *National Lampoon* published an issue that had to be banned in Canada because of its shocking cover. Diana, who was a very private person, became depressed, and William and Henry, who could now read, were constantly getting into fights at school to protect their parents' honor.

One night Magumba held Diana in his arms and said, "I wish life could be simple again. I wish we could get away from it all."

"Me, too," said Diana. "People can be so cruel. They love you one day, then ridicule you the next."

"Yes, they're just like the maga-maga bird of the jungle. Why don't we...Oh, but you'd think I was mad."

"Why don't we what? Tell me."

"Why don't we leave this country and go back to my people in Africa?"

"The Kwangis?"

"Yes. We'll have a nice little hut. I'll hunt, and you'll cook. And the children will make new friends and play simple games with pebbles and bones. We'll watch the seasons go by -- the warm season, the hot season, and the infernally hot season. In the daytime we'll watch the hyenas and the warthogs cavort, and at night we'll listen to the bats. We'll wash ourselves in the river. Everyone can go more or less naked. You'll love the Kwangis and they'll love you."

And so it was settled. Magumba and Diana left all their money and possessions to charity and flew to Africa with their children.

As they got out of the bus that left them at the edge of the jungle, Magumba handed the driver a poem to be published in the newspapers. It was to be the last word that civilization would ever hear from any of them:

"Farewell to Technology"

*The morning dew cries out to feed
The thirsty cow.*

My soul cries out to swim among the fish.

Oh Empire of Cement,

*Your facial features contain pimples of bewilderment.
The wounded dogs are screaming in the streets.*

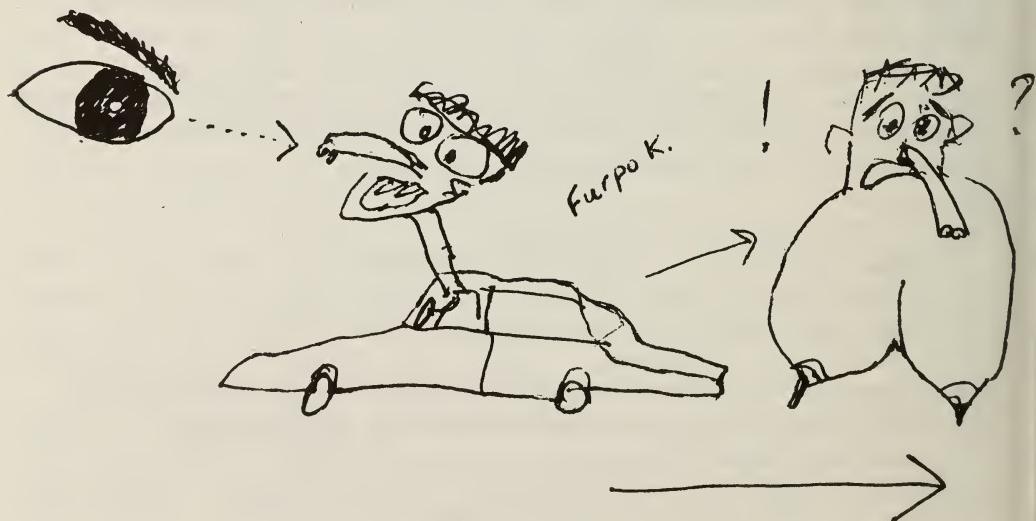
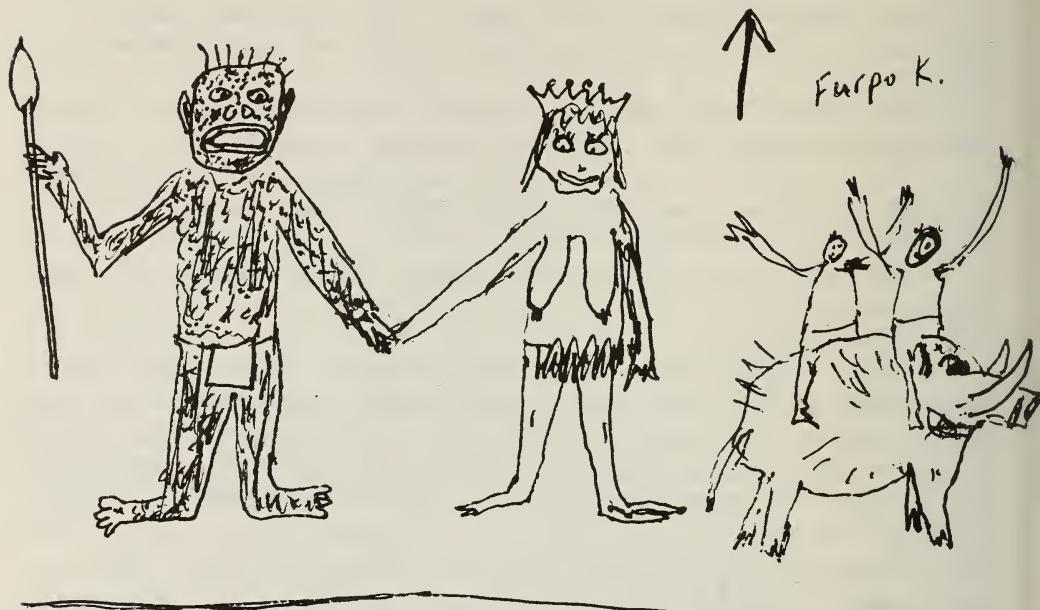
Attache' case of Death.

Industrial footwear of Doom.

As the dawn greets the new day

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And its logical infrastructure,
I go to stand in fields of corn
And throw myself humbly into the complexity
Of a potato.



BIG TITS

One morning Vito Giaboni woke up to discover that he had big tits like a woman. At first he thought it was a weird dream, like the one he once had in which he removed his penis and stuck himself in the ass with it. He worried about that one for a long time because he was afraid it meant he was turning into a queer.

But this was no dream. He stood in front of the mirror looking at his new tits and feeling them, hoping that they were maybe a combination of a mild swelling and an optical illusion. But Vito had seen too many skin magazines not to recognize real tits.

Vito began to shake all over because he was scared. What was happening to him? Was it permanent? Would he need an operation? Would he ever be able to go cruising with his buddies again?

Since it was Saturday, he didn't have to go to work. But he couldn't stay up in his room forever. He had to face other people sooner or later. He could only trust two people -- his sister and his mother. His father would probably beat the shit out of him and kick him out of the house if he saw him like that, even though his father was a midget and Vito was a great big greaser with muscles.

Vito opened his bedroom door a bit and peeked out. He could hear his sister in the bathroom shaving her legs. His mother was in the big bedroom hanging the bedsheets out the window to air them out.

"Mama!" he called to her. "Mama, come here a minute!" She came to his room. "Yes, darling, what is it?"

Vito said to her, "Mama, don't scream, but I have to show you something. I don't understand it." And he opened his bathrobe to reveal the big tits.

Mrs. Giaboni screamed and crossed herself. "My son is cursed! My son is cursed! Vito, someone has put the *mal occhio* on you!" And she began to cry.

Vito's sister heard the fuss and came out of the bathroom. She still had some depilatory cream over her lip. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"Maria, your brother has been cursed! He has...breasts...like a woman!"

And Vito showed his sister his deformity, and she

crossed herself and asked, "Is it a disease? Is it AIDS?"

"No!" responded Vito. "Whaddya think I am?"

"It is the *mal occhio* -- the evil eye!" repeated Mrs. Giaboni. "This will kill your father if he sees it! Good thing he's working today!"

"What'll I do?" asked Vito. "Call the doctor?"

"Stay in your room. I'm going to call somebody I know."

So Vito remained in his room, wondering who had given him the evil eye and why. Maybe it was one of the little student creeps he had beaten up at the drive-in or outside the bar, or maybe it was one of the girls he had made rude remarks to on Yonge St.

Normally, Vito would begin a Saturday by standing in front of the mirror and practicing his best lines to use that evening. He would say, "Oh, yeah? Well, fuck you, mother-fucker!" and "Oh, yeah? Well, eat me, asshole!" and "Hey, baby, wanna suck my pepperoni?" But now that seemed inappropriate.

Normally, after that he would put on a tight T-shirt that showed off his muscles and tight jeans that showed off his heavy-duty equipment. Then he would practice swaggering around and get in the mood for an evening with Tony and Gino. The three of them would cruise around in Tony's Camaro and stick their greasy heads out the window to make sure everyone noticed how cool they were. They'd drink a case of beer and maybe barf in a parking lot somewhere or get into a fight. It was a good life. But he could see that it would be something of a problem now with big tits like a woman.

Then Vito looked at his penis to see if it was the same. It seemed okay, so there was still hope.

Another problem was what to wear to hide his tits. He put on an oversized T-shirt. That wasn't good enough. He would have to wear a raincoat whenever he went out.

His mother came back to his room and said, "Get dressed. I'm taking you to Sister Rosa right away." Sister Rosa was the local fortune-teller. Her two retarded children would hand out leaflets on the street advertising her services, and she enjoyed a good reputation among the simple immigrants in the neighborhood. She could speak Italian, Portuguese, and Greek. Other than that, she had gone to the fourth grade in Sicily and learned fortune-telling from an old woman who also did abortions and sold guns.

Sister Rosa's parlor was located above a barber shop on

St. Clair Avenue West. She entertained clients from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and occasionally by special appointment on Sundays and in the evenings. At any time there were bound to be a few old women in black shawls or even young women waiting to see her.

Vito and his mother had to wait only a half hour to see Sister Rosa, who, sensing a big fee, speeded up the traffic as much as possible.

"Look at what's happened to my son," said Mrs. Giaboni. And Vito took off his raincoat and T-shirt.

"Tsk! Tsk! Tsk!" said Sister Rosa. "This is very expensive--I mean, bad. Very bad. It is the *mal occhio* and will be very hard to remove."

"Can you help him?" pleaded Mrs. Giaboni. "Whatever it will cost, I will pay it."

"Of course. I understand. Don't worry. I know how to fight the *mal occhio*, although this case may take a while."

And Sister Rosa gave them the following instructions: they were to get a live rooster and chop off its head. Vito then had to implant the rooster's head in his rectum and leave it there for a week, removing it only to go to the bathroom. At the end of that week they were to return.

"And will he be cured?" asked Mrs. Giaboni.

"Let us hope so. Of course, you must pray at all times. After all, it is God who finally decides these things."

"Thank you. How much must I pay you?" asked Mrs. Giaboni.

"Out of the goodness of my heart, only five thousand dollars."

"I don't have that much with me."

"You can write me a cheque or bring me the money when the banks open on Monday."

So Vito and his mother thanked Sister Rosa and left.

They went to a market where they could buy a live rooster, and they took it home. Mrs. Giaboni cut its head off with a knife and helped her son insert it in his rectum. It was the sort of thing a mother was expected to do for her son. Then Vito went up to his room while Mrs. Giaboni and Maria prayed before their picture of the Virgin Mary.

Vito was very uncomfortable, but after a while he got a little bit used to the rooster's head up his ass. He was able to watch TV.

When Mr. Giaboni got home from the construction site,

they had to break the bad news to him. "AAARRGH!" he screamed, as he tore his hair out and threw the bric-a-brac against the wall. "He has disgraced us!" And he started to run up to Vito's room to beat him up because he couldn't think of anything else to do. But his wife and daughter clung to him and pleaded with him to calm down, saying that Vito was cursed through no fault of his own and that if they all prayed and trusted in Sister Rosa, Vito would be cured.

"How much dis-a gonna cost?" he asked.

"Five thousand dollars," replied his wife, whereupon the old man sank into a chair, muttering, as he calculated the drain on their savings.

That evening, Vito's friends called him up to go cruising, but he told them he had the flu.

On Monday he called his foreman at the warehouse and gave him the same excuse. He wondered how long he could get away with it.

Maria was a great comfort to Vito during that week. She would help him examine his body every evening to see if there were any changes. Vito did not mind showing his nakedness to his sister because this was the sort of help a sister was expected to give. She told him his breasts were very well-shaped considering their large size and joked that they were nicer than hers. Maria also helped Vito check on his penis by making it erect for him and measuring it with a ruler. Again, under normal circumstances this would've been a sin, but an unusual medical problem made it okay.

Vito's boss was becoming increasingly impatient, and Tony and Gino were also puzzled as to his seclusion. They often liked to go out to the park in the evening and kick the old soccer ball around, but Vito wouldn't come out.

By Friday, Vito and his sister agreed that his penis was shrinking. "Try! Try!" she urged him as she rubbed it for him. "Think sexy thoughts!"

"I'm trying! That's as big as it'll get!" said Vito.

When Mrs. Giaboni took Vito back to Sister Rosa on Saturday, the fortune-teller examined him and said, "Tsk! Tsk! Did you follow my instructions exactly?"

"Yes!" they both replied. Vito showed her the rooster's head, which he had removed that morning. She examined it very closely and nodded as if she understood something.

"We must resort to something stronger. For the next week, Vito must sleep in a wooden box with a cross painted on

each side. And there is something else." She went to a cupboard and brought back a small bottle, which contained a liquid that looked like urine mixed with green dirt. "He must drink one tablespoon of this every night. We are dealing with the *mal occhio*, you understand, but I'm confident that you will see a change by the time you come back next Saturday."

"Thank you, Sister Rosa," said Mrs. Giaboni, rising.

"The cost will be ten thousand dollars," said Sister Rosa calmly. "The *mal occhio* respects and fears money."

So they went home and broke the news to Mr. Giaboni, who screamed, threw some dishes around, and collapsed onto the sofa in tears because he couldn't think of anything better to do. Then he roused himself with a great sigh and went down to his basement workshop to build a wooden box for his son.

That evening Tony called to ask Vito to go cruising.

"*You ain't still sick, are you?*"

"Yeah, I feel terrible," replied Vito.

"*You sound different.*"

"What do you mean?"

"*Your voice. It sounds different.*"

"Oh. It's because I'm sick. I'll talk to you next week, Tony. Good-bye."

Vito asked his mother and sister if his voice sounded different. They agreed that it did a little. They said it sounded a little bit feminine.

That night Vito took the medicine Sister Rosa had given him. It tasted like urine and mold. He almost vomited. His father carried the wooden box up to his room, and Vito slept in it but did not sleep very well.

The next day Vito discovered that all his chest hair had fallen out and most of the hair from his legs and arms, too. His beard seemed pretty thin, too. His tits were just the same as before.

On Monday, when he called in sick again, his foreman told him he was fired. He was sorry to do it, but the place was so busy they had to hire a new man and they decided to keep him because he was in the country illegally and was willing to work cheap.

Vito told his mother, "I've lost my job."

"You'll find another one," she replied.

"Yeah, I'll be a freak in the circus," he said with disgust.

All that week Vito slept in his wooden box and took his medicine of urine and mold. And his sister would rub his penis and measure it. But Vito's condition worsened. His beard stopped growing. His face was smooth, except for a little fuzz above the lip. His penis had shrunk and seemed to be retracting into his body. His voice had softened. And he was becoming thinner in some spots. His father refused to look at him.

Vito had never prayed except in church, but now he prayed to God to fix him so he could be normal again. He told God he was sorry if he had done anything wrong and promised to be good from now on, although he didn't think he was bad to begin with.

On Saturday, Vito and his mother returned once more to Sister Rosa. She examined him carefully and said nothing except, "Hmm...hmm...", as she pretended to understand what she saw. Finally she announced, "We are beginning to defeat the *mal occhio*. I can see hope here."

"I'm worse than ever!" complained Vito in his girlish voice.

"No, you are not," Sister Rosa insisted. "I know it seems that way to you, but you must trust me. Let me look in your ear." And when Vito turned his ear to her, she began to poke around in it and then suddenly revealed to them a peculiar reddish crust in her hand. "Aha! See what I have found! This is very important."

Mrs. Giaboni was very impressed by this bit of magic. "Is it good or bad?" she asked.

"It is both good and bad," replied Sister Rosa. "The *mal occhio* is challenging us with its greatest power. We must respond. For the next week Vito must wear a thick, scratchy rope wrapped tightly around his body. He must eat nothing but one raw egg a day and drink nothing but water with a little red vinegar in it."

"Does he still have to sleep in that box and drink the medicine?" asked Mrs. Giaboni.

"No. They have done their work. Instead, he must sleep in the bathtub with a dozen live eels. In one more week the *mal occhio* will be defeated."

"Thank you!" said Mrs. Giaboni, clasping Sister Rosa's hand in gratitude.

"The additional cost will be twenty thousand dollars. Such a sum of money will frighten away the *mal occhio*."

"We'll have to mortgage the house," said Mrs. Giaboni sadly.

"Thank God that you have a house to mortgage."

So Vito and his mother returned home and broke the news to Mr. Giaboni. The old man ran headlong into a wall and knocked himself out but recovered.

Tony and Gino showed up at the front door that evening, but Mrs. Giaboni said Vito was under medication and had gone to sleep.

"What's wrong with him?" asked Tony.

"He's just sick," replied Mrs. Giaboni.

"Maybe he don't wanna cruise with us no more," remarked Gino. "Maybe we ain't good enough for him."

"Oh, no, he's just sick," said Mrs. Giaboni. "I'll tell him you called." The two boys went away not entirely convinced.

That night Vito's sister wrapped his naked body tightly with a coarse rope, and he got into the tub with the live eels, which, incidentally, were not the easiest thing to find on short notice. Vito got no sleep at all that night and spent Sunday in his bed sleeping.

During the next few days his body underwent major changes. The shape of his body became feminine except that he was still rather muscular and broad-shouldered. His hair became softer. His voice was definitely feminine, although somewhat deep. And his penis had disappeared entirely inside his body.

In the early hours of Friday morning, they heard screams coming from the bathroom. The family burst in to find Vito in the throes of a spasm or seizure. He held his crotch in pain. When his mother and sister examined him, they were shocked to see that Vito had developed a perfectly-shaped vagina, complete with clitoris. He was now, for all intents and purposes, a woman.

His sister, Maria, took him to bed with her to console him. Vito said he wanted to commit suicide, but Maria reassured him that it was not so terrible to be a woman. She showed him how to masturbate with and without a dildo. This was the sort of help a sister was expected to give a brother who had changed his sex, so there was nothing sinful about it.

The next evening after work, Maria bought some women's jeans and shirts to fit Vito's new body. And she gave him a

new name -- Evita -- and began to treat him like a sister rather than a brother.

When Mrs. Giaboni took Vito (Evita) back to Sister Rosa, she exclaimed angrily, "See what you've done! You've ruined my son forever!"

Sister Rosa clasped her hands as if in prayer and put on an expression of divine excitement and joy. "Praise God! The *mal occhio* has been defeated!"

"What are you talking about?" demanded the mother.

"God has given you a new daughter! This is His will! It is a miracle and a blessing!"

She was so convincing, Mrs. Giaboni accepted her words, although not too happily. She took her new daughter home and tried to figure out how to adapt to this change of sex.

Mrs. Giaboni, Maria, and Evita were able to solve the problem. They would tell people that Vito had left home suddenly and joined the Army. They would pass Evita off as a cousin who had just immigrated to Canada from the old country and who was going to live with them.

For Evita, however, there was still a problem. She still had the macho, masculine mind of Vito. The only solution, therefore, was for Evita to become a Lesbian.

Today Evita is a popular figure in all the gay clubs and bars. She is the hottest bull dyke in the city, standing 6'2", broad-shouldered, and muscular, with big tits.

Tony and Gino still cruise along Yonge St. in their Camaro. They've got their eyes on this hot new chick they never saw before, and they stick their greasy heads out the window and call out, "Hey, Amazon, you wanna sit on my face?" and "Hey, baby, I give you a big pepperoni, you forget all about girls, ha, ha!" But Evita ignores them as she walks along with her arm around a cute little gay brunette.

"Ahhh, they're all freaks, ya know," Tony says to Gino as he eyes those big knockers.

"Yeah, they're really sick," agrees Gino. "I wonder how they get that way."

"WRITE SOMETHING FOR THE MASSES! WRITE SOMETHING THAT WILL SELL!"

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